IN THE CLAIMS

Please reconsider the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended) A method for selecting a ~~determining at least one best performing~~ content server ~~in response to a request~~ in a network including a plurality of content servers[[,]] and at least one redirection server, ~~and a plurality of clients, the method~~ comprising ~~the steps of~~:

(a) creating ~~a plurality of~~ client clusters using the steps of: ~~, wherein each of said plurality of client cluster clusters includes one or more~~

(a1) identifying clients having similar network distance properties;

(a2) grouping distance tuples using content server ID and classless inter-domain routing address (CIDR) prefix similarity to define grouping data values, a distance tuple comprising at least one of a network distance, a content server identifier, a time-stamp, and a client internet protocol (IP) address;

(a3) storing the data values at leaf nodes of a hierarchical tree structure having a root node representing CIDR space and a plurality of interior and leaf nodes, said data values including load information, network distances, and a number of the tuples; and

(a4) defining the client clusters by combining leaf nodes having sufficient similarity into parent nodes and identifying remaining leaf nodes as the client clusters;

(b) identifying [[said]] at least one best-performing content server for each of said ~~plurality of~~ client clusters by ~~determining network distances between each of said plurality of client clusters and each of said plurality of content servers and~~ selecting at least one content server ~~for each of said plurality of client clusters~~ having a minimal ~~minimum~~ network distance ~~there between~~ to the client cluster; and

(c) mapping ~~each of said plurality of~~ the client clusters ~~to a corresponding said at least one identified~~ with the at least one best-performing content server.

2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one redirection server is an authoritative domain name (DN) server coupled to a ~~which receives said requests from a~~ plurality of local DNS servers.

3. (cancelled)

4. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the step (c) further comprises:

~~including the step of~~ assigning [[a]] selection probability to the ~~each of said~~ at least one ~~identified~~ best-performing content server~~, wherein said selection probability ensures~~ to ensure that [[a]] maximum service capacity of ~~each of said at least one identified~~ the ~~best-performing content~~ server is not [[never]] exceeded.

5. (cancelled)

6. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 [[5]], wherein the step (a3) further comprises: ~~of obtaining distance information includes the steps of:~~

collecting at said ~~plurality of~~ content servers ~~a plurality of~~ load tuples, wherein each load tuple comprises at least one of ~~or more of the following:~~ a time-stamp, a content-server ID, a client IP address, a number of hits, and a domain index.

7. (currently amended) The method of claim 6 [[5]], further comprising: ~~the step of~~

pulling the ~~said plurality of~~ distance and load tuples ~~from each of said plurality of content servers~~ at successive data acquisition intervals; and

storing the ~~plurality of~~ distance and load tuples at said at least one redirection server.

8. (currently amended) The method of claim 7 [[6]], further comprising the step of multiplying ~~certain~~ data values corresponding to the ~~of said plurality of~~ distance and load tuples by a weighting factor in each of said successive data acquisition intervals.

9. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 [[6]], wherein [[said]] a

network distance is computed as one of a round trip time, jitter, bandwidth and packet loss.

10. (currently amended) The method of claim 9, wherein said round trip time is computed by monitoring [[all]] data packets transmitted and received by the ~~one of said plurality of~~ content servers.

11-13. (cancelled)

14. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the step (c) ~~of mapping each of said plurality of client clusters with the corresponding said at least one the identified best-performing content server~~ further comprises; ~~the step of~~ assigning an assignment probability to the ~~each of said~~ at least one ~~identified~~ best-performing content server.

15. (currently amended) The method of claim 14 [[13]], wherein said assignment probabilities ~~for each of said at least one identified best-performing content server is~~ are obtained from a flow map characterizing data flow in the network.

16. (currently amended) A system for selecting a ~~determining at least one best-performing~~ content server ~~in response to a client request~~ in a network including a plurality of content servers[[,]] and at least one redirection server, ~~and a plurality of clients, the system~~ comprising:

a first means [[for]] creating ~~a plurality of~~ client clusters using the steps of:

~~, wherein each of said plurality of client clusters includes one or more clients having IP addresses having similar network distance properties;~~

(a1) identifying clients having similar network distance properties;

(a2) grouping distance tuples using content server ID and classless inter-domain routing address (CIDR) prefix similarity to define grouping data values, a distance tuple comprising at least one of a network distance, a content server identifier, a time-stamp, and a client internet protocol (IP) address;

(a3) storing the data values at leaf nodes of a hierarchical tree structure having a root node representing CIDR space and a plurality of interior and leaf nodes, said data values including load information, network distances, and a number of the tuples; and

(a4) defining the client clusters by combining leaf nodes having sufficient similarity into parent nodes and identifying remaining leaf nodes as the client clusters;

a second means [[for]] identifying [[said]] at least one best-performing content server for each of said ~~plurality of~~ client clusters by ~~determining network distances between each of said plurality of client clusters and each of said plurality of content servers and~~ selecting at least one content server ~~for each of said plurality of client clusters~~ having a minimum network distance ~~there between~~ to the client cluster; and

a third means [[for]] mapping ~~each of said plurality of~~ the client clusters with the ~~a corresponding said~~ at least one ~~identified~~ best-performing content server.

17. (currently amended) The system of claim 16, further including a forth means for assigning [[a]] selection probability to the ~~each of said~~ at least one ~~identified~~ best-performing content server ~~, wherein said selection probability ensures~~ to ensure that [[a]] maximum service capacity of ~~each of said at least one identified~~ the ~~best-performing content~~ server is not [[never]] exceeded.

18. (cancelled)

19. (currently amended) The system of claim 18, wherein [[said]] the first means ~~for obtaining distance and load information~~ further includes:

a forth means [[for]] collecting at said ~~plurality of~~ content servers ~~a plurality of~~ load tuples, wherein each load tuple comprises at least one of ~~or more of the following:~~ a time-stamp, a content-server ID, a client IP address, a number of hits, and a domain index.

20. (currently amended) The system of claim 16, wherein ~~said identifying~~ the first means further includes:

a fifth means [[for]] modifying ~~said determined~~ the network distance based upon ~~according to the~~ a number of distance tuples received.

21. (currently amended) The system of claim 16, wherein ~~said identifying~~ the first means further includes:

a sixth means [[for]] maintaining [[said]] identification of said at least one ~~identified~~ best-performing content server for an amount of time determined by [[a]] calculating a confidence level ~~calculation~~.